

THE
SUBSTANCE
OF A 10.
CHARGE

Delivered at SUNDERLAND,

TO THE

Rev. Mr. JOHN HESLUP,

At his ORDINATION, April 9, 1777.

By the Rev. MR. JOHN KNIPE:

TOGETHER WITH

An EXHORTATION to the PEOPLE,

By the Rev. MR. JAMES BROWNFIELD.

AND

MR. HESLUP'S

CONFESSION of FAITH.

PUBLISHED *at the* REQUEST *of the* CHURCH.

NEWCASTLE:

Printed by T. SAINT, in PILGRIM-STREET.

M.DCC.LXXVII.

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AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
PROCEEDINGS

Relative to the ORDINATION of the
Rev. Mr. JOHN HESLUP,
To the CHURCH of CHRIST denominated
INDEPENDENT, assembling in *Ropery-Lane*,
SUNDERLAND.

ON the 9th of April, 1777, the Day appointed for the above Purpose, the Church being met, and a numerous Concourse of People assembled, the Rev. Mr. Brownfield entered upon the solemn Work of the Day, in Praise and Prayer; after which, he addressed the People, in an introductory Discourse, purporting that God hath had a Church in every Age and Period of the World, from Adam and Eve in Paradise to this present Day; and that it is his Will and Command, a scriptural, and consistent Plan of Government and Discipline ought to be maintained therein, by the Members thereof, to the End of Time.

He then proceeded in propounding the following Question; viz. Who was the Means, or Instrument, and by what Providence of God, was the present Work brought to this Period?—One of the Deacons from Newcastle (previously nominated by the Brethren) then stood up, and gave a particular Answer to the aforementioned Question, in Substance as follows: “ That, about July, in the Year of our
 “ Lord 1772, a Mr. Inglesby of London, being on a Journey to the North, took an Opportunity of renewing his former Acquaintance with the Rev. Mr. Knipe; and, after
 “ spending a few Days in Newcastle, engaged his Company to Sunderland, where he, namely, Mr. I———y, had some religious
 “ Acquaintance: After a short Interview, Mr. Knipe was unexpectedly solicited to preach
 “ that Evening, which he did; hereupon, several of them requested his repeated Visits,
 “ occasionally, so far as his Charge at Newcastle, and other Avocations, would admit.
 “ A Door being thus opened, he accordingly repeated his Visits, from Time to Time,
 “ while he found that the Word preached was evidently blessed, to the Conviction and
 “ Edification of many, and perceived that a Spirit of Amity and Love was apparent amongst them: At length a Request was
 “ made, by a Number of Persons residing in Sunderland, and its Environs, to the Rev.
 “ Mr Knipe, the Deacons, and Members of the Church at Newcastle, under his pastoral
 “ Care,

“ Care, setting forth, in Terms of Gratitude,
 “ their Affection and Regard towards him, for
 “ his Work's Sake; and acknowledging the
 “ peculiar Goodness of God, in having owned
 “ and honoured his Word, to their Increase in
 “ the Knowledge and Experience of Gospel-
 “ Truths, and expressing their Desire of being
 “ admitted into Communion with, and confi-
 “ dered as a Branch of the said Church: This,
 “ after a proper Scrutiny, was agreed unto at
 “ a Church-Meeting, in Consequence where-
 “ of, the Covenant-Engagement, Articles of
 “ Belief, and Rules, were entered into, agreed
 “ upon, and signed by them, agreeable to the
 “ Practice of the said Church at Newcastle;
 “ Mr. Knipe still continuing to visit them occa-
 “ sionally, as he found Opportunity.

“ A short Time after this, produced a Peti-
 “ tion from the said Brethren, desiring, that
 “ Mr. Knipe might be requested and allowed
 “ to dispense the Sacrament of the Lord's Sup-
 “ per amongst them once in three Months,
 “ which was accordingly resolved upon.

“ The Church and Congregation still in-
 “ creasing in Numbers, by Means of their
 “ stated Meetings, and Mr. Knipe's occasional
 “ Visits, they judged it expedient to enquire
 “ for One, who was believed to be qualified of
 “ God to go out and in amongst them, in the
 “ Order and Ordinances of his House, and to
 “ take the Pastoral Charge of them as a Church
 “ of Christ, on the Independent Plan; the
 “ Advice and Assistance of the Minister and
 “ Officers

“ Officers of the Church at Newcastle, was
 “ solicited in Order to procuring a suitable
 “ Pastor. Mr. Knipe having, by Means of
 “ the Rev. Mr. Brownfield, prior to this Re-
 “ quest being made, heard of Mr. Hestup’s
 “ Qualifications for the Work of the Ministry
 “ (which had given rise to a Correspondence
 “ with him by Letter,) not long after the In-
 “ tention of the Sunderland Brethren transpi-
 “ red, was providentially favoured with an
 “ Interview with him, in Sunderland, where
 “ he was requested then to preach, and after-
 “ wards invited to Newcastle at different
 “ Times. He continued, at their Request,
 “ for a Series of Months, to attend at Sunder-
 “ land, the Result of which was, a Call from
 “ this People, to take upon him the Pastoral
 “ Care over them, (under Christ the great
 “ Shepherd of his Sheep,) which he hath been
 “ induced to accept; and thus the Grace and
 “ good Providence of God, hath attended
 “ them from their first Acquaintance with the
 “ Rev. Mr. Knipe, to this happy Period.”

The above Account being related, the Mem-
 bers of the Church then recognized their Call,
 which Mr. Hestup declaring his Acceptance of,
 he was called upon to deliver a Confession of
 his Faith, which he did: After the prescribed
 and accustomary Form of laying on of Hands
 in the Exercise of solemn Prayer; Mr. Knipe
 gave him the Charge, the Substance of which
 is subjoined, and Mr. Brownfield delivered the
 following Exhortation to the People.

Mr.

Mr. H E S L U P's

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

AS every rational Being must be answerable, as well for what he believes, as for the whole of his moral Conduct; during his Passage through Life; and as I am enjoined by my Maker, to take heed how I imbibe Sentiments of a religious Nature, and what Principles I promulge in the Capacity of a *Pastor*; I desire to speak as in the Presence, and under the immediate Inspection of that God, before whose awful Tribunal I am shortly to make my personal Appearance.

From what is recorded in the Scriptures of Truth, and from calm and mature Reflection on the Works of Creation; I cannot possibly avoid believing the Being and Existence of God, who is characterized, as pure from every Stain of Sin, and every Spot of Unrighteousness: That he is Independent, Omnipotent, possessed of perfect Wisdom, and consummate Holiness; unchangeable in his Nature, and altogether incomprehensible by finite Mortals.

I moreover believe, that in the Unity of the Godhead there are Three Persons, of the same Substance, viz. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and that these *Three* are *One*.

I be-

I believe, that no sooner did Man (who had been created in the Image of God), by Sin and Disobedience, deprive himself of every Thing (truly and strictly speaking) that was good, but a gracious Promise of the *Messiah* was revealed, for his Comfort and Satisfaction, as well as his fallen Posterity.

I believe, it pleased God to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, to be the Surety of Sinners; to act in the Capacity of Prophet, Priest, and King; that he might teach, atone for, rule, protect, and defend his People. Scripture Passages confirm this; *Isai. liv. 13.* “*All thy Children shall be taught of the Lord;*”—the Consequence of which teaching is Peace: Hence, it is added, “*Great shall be the Peace of thy Children.*”—This is a Scripture of such Importance, tends so much to the Tranquillity and Repose of God’s People, that our blessed Saviour himself cites it, *John vi. 45.* In the Book of *Jeremiah* this Truth is laid down, partly in the same words, only in a more copious Manner; *Jer. xxxi. 34.* “*And they shall teach no more every Man his Neighbour, and every Man his Brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall know me.*” q. d. I myself will teach them Divine Knowledge, and make them truly happy. We are (in Christ’s School) very dull Scholars, but he teacheth us his Will and Mind, in such a patient and wonderful Manner, that we cannot but receive his sacred Wisdom. He atones for the Sins and Failings of his

his Followers; this is clear from *Isai. liii.* and indeed from the whole New Testament, particularly the Epistle to the Hebrews; and that he protects his Disciples, and defends his Saints, his own Word (which abideth for ever) fully testifies; *Isai. xxvi. 1.* “*We have a strong City, “ Salvation will God appoint for Walls and Bulwarks.”*—The same comfortable Declaration we have recorded, *Pf. cxxv. 1, 2.* “*They that “ trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which “ cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As “ the Mountains are round about Jerusalem, so “ the Lord is round about his People, from hence- “ forth, even for ever.”*—I believe, in the Fulness of Time, the Time fixed upon in the Divine Decree, and mentioned by the Old Prophets, the Messiah appeared incarnate, united to Flesh and Blood, made the Precepts of the moral Law honourable by his holy Life, and sustained its Penalties by his sufferings and Death, on the Behalf of all those who shall arrive at Heaven—and that as *he died for our Sins,* i. e. to atone for them, he “*rose again for our Justification.*” That his Resurrection was one Proof of his Divinity—typified the raising of his ransomed Flock from Sin and spiritual Death—and clearly bespoke a general Resurrection at the last Day.—His Ascension to Heaven, after his satisfactory Work, and vicarious Employ being finished on Earth, sufficiently taught, and clearly made known, that all his *Elect*, in his own Time, should finally be put in Possession of the shin-

ing Glories, and ravishing Beauties, peculiar to the celestial World.

I am made to believe, that the Son of God did all this with hearty Pleasure, and all possible Willingness, knowing it to be for the Good and Welfare of his People, whose Persons he loved, and whose Souls he redeemed.

I believe, the Holy Ghost, by his eternal Operation and gracious Working, convinceth of Sin, and of Righteousness; that he illuminates the Understanding with the Knowledge of the Truth, in order to make it practical; which he effecteth, by bringing the Conscience to submit to the Sovereignty of God in his Law, and to receive the Righteousness of Christ as it is held forth in the Gospel: He makes known the Father's Love, and the Son's Salvation, to those who from the Beginning have been chosen to everlasting Life.

I likewise firmly believe, that all those of Mankind who embrace the Gospel in the Way and Form specified in the foregoing Article; I mean, those who are effectually called, will most certainly endure to the End; that not one of them shall finally perish, but be infallibly "*kept by the Power of God, through Faith, to eternal Salvation.*" Thus, it appears to me as clear as Noon, that the saving of Sinners, from *first to last*, is the Work of the sacred Trinity: For Man, by his Fall, hath wholly lost *all* Ability of Will to spiritual Good. The Scripture expressly declares that we are *dead*, not *partly*, but *altogether* dead in Trespases and Sins; that we are separated at
the

the greatest Distance from God, who is the Soul of our Soul, and the Life of our Life; or, in the Language of the Holy Ghost, that we are *alienated from the Life of God*. We are spiritually insensible as to *the Things which make for our Peace*: In this State we remain till quickened by the Spirit, and enlivened by Grace. The Moment Grace is revealed in our Hearts, we are regenerated and born again; the Instant we begin to live, we are renewed, at least, in a great Measure:—There can be no intermediate State between Regeneration and Unregeneration; for we must either be dead or alive; be led either by the *Flesh*, or the *Spirit*. St. Paul affirms, that every Believer is led and guided by the Spirit; under the Influence of which, it is his Privilege to mortify the *Old Man*.—Thus the Grace of God finds us dead, and breathes upon us that we may have Life.

I am further convinced, relating to the Wicked and Unconverted, that they shall be turned into Hell, on Account of their own Sins, there to suffer the Vengeance of eternal Fire.

I am moreover persuaded, that it is the Will of Christ, with Reference to true Believers, those, who are united to him, that they should assemble together in a religious Way, with a View to glorify God, and to promote their own personal Holiness; that he has instituted, that proper Officers, viz. *Pastors* and *Deacons*, who he calls by Grace, should be in his Church to the End of Time.

I believe that *Baptism* is agreeable to the Mind of God, being instituted and appointed by Jesus Christ. This, as well as the *Lord's Supper* are New-Testament Ordinances; were used by our *Lord* himself to set us an Example; and by his Use they were sufficiently consecrated to his People. These, in my Judgment, are held forth by the Apostle, 1 Cor. xii. 13. as sacred Seals of the Union and Communion of Believers, both with Christ, and with one another. Thus, I have mentioned a few salutary Truths, and scriptural Positions, which I at present believe, and, through Grace, intend to abide by, and preach all my Days.



THE
SUBSTANCE of a CHARGE, &c.

JOHN, Chap. xxi. Ver. 17. last Clause.

—*Jesus saith unto him, Feed my Sheep.*

HOW rich is this Discovery of the Redeemer's Love!—Especially when we consider unto whom this Direction is given; namely, *Peter*: What! lying, swearing, backsliding *Peter*? Well might the beloved Disciple say, "*What manner of Love is this, that we,*" who were some time alienated, and Enemies in our Minds by wicked works, (as another Apostle testifies) "*should be called*"
" the

"*the Sons of God* *," Not his Sons To-day, and Children of the Devil To-morrow; but His as "*Loved with an everlasting Love* †," and in due Time powerfully "*drawn*" to an humble Dependance on himself, for every needful Supply of Grace and Strength, to "*believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us Commandment* ‡."

I hope and believe, Sir, you are "*called of God* §," to feed Christ's Sheep;" and that he is now sending you as his Instrument, next to his Word and Spirit, to call and comfort them. Jesus Christ, Sir, is the chief Shepherd; and as the Sheep never seek after the Shepherd, until they are found of him, so our great Redeemer condescends to bless the Labours of his Ministers for this valuable End, of gathering his People out from amongst those Ruins, wherein they are involved by the Fall.

It is clear, that by Sheep, in the Words of our Text, is signified the Church or Children of God; Our dear Lord frequently calls them by this Name; "*My Sheep*," says he, "*hear my Voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*" And again—"Other Sheep I have, which are not of this fold, and they shall hear my Voice §." q. d. I have them as safe, as if they were now in glory.

The Text informs us that the Sheep are Christ's.—They are *his*, in various Respects;—permit me, briefly to mention a few Particulars on this Head: They are secured to him by

* 1 John iii. 1.

† Heb. v. 4.

‡ Jer. xxxi.

§ John x.

† 1 John iii. 23.

Gift: *"Thine they were,"* saith the blessed Redeemer, *"and thou gavest them me *."* Their Names are written in Heaven †, and I am persuaded there is no Blot nor Erasure in God's Book. The Lord Jesus Christ hath an undoubted Title unto them, from what he hath done and suffered for them: He is *the Lord their Righteousness ‡*; and he *"laid down his Life for the Sheep ††"*. They are likewise secured by the Power of Jesus: *"None shall pluck them out of his Hand ¶: He liveth for ever, and because he liveth, they shall live also **."* *W. and*

O! how great is the Pride and Ignorance of those who maintain, and assert, that the poor Sheep stand and persevere, by the Hold they have in their own Strength of Christ, and not, as some of the old Scotch Divines used truly to say, by the *fast Grip* he hath on them! *and*

Those who are employed in tending these Animals, inform us, that the Sheep will frequently wander from the good to the bad Pasture,—from the dry to the flooded Land; where the Greenness of the Grass is alluring to the silly Rover, but the End often fatal and destructive;—just so, do Christ's Sheep too often stray from the *solid Ground* of a free and finished Salvation, wrought out for them by their Divine Surety, to the *rotten Ridges* of Arminian Conditions, which they mistakenly suppose are to be performed by them, in order to their Acceptance with God; to the manifest Hinderance of their Growth and Increase

* John xvii. 6.

† Luke x. 20.

‡ Jer. xxiii. 6.

†† John x. 15.

¶ Ibid. ver. 28.

** John xiv. 19.

in the Knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus, and Experience of true Gospel Comfort. They further tell us, that the Shepherd can generally form an Idea, whether or no the Sheep is in a thriving Condition, by its Eyes:—So may you, Sir, of many, who probably have in Time past appeared well affected to the “Cause of God and Truth,” and (as saith the Apostle) “*did run well* *”—They will shun your Ministry—look cool in Company, and pass you with a Degree of Shyness and Indifference in the Street: But, Sir, I beseech you, run after them; do not give them up; say unto them, “*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you †? Come back to Christ: Remember, from whence you are fallen ‡; return to your first Husband ¶, who “hateth putting away.” Endeavour, by such Expostulations as these, to win them instrumentally to a sense of their Duty, and to maintain an uniform Walk in the Church below.*

It is also remarked, that a rotten Sheep hath stinking Breath:—So have all those, who will not allow the Redeemer to have the whole Praise, of beginning, carrying on, and completing the Work of Salvation, and every Part thereof; for them, in them, and by them:—Their Breath, I say, stinks of human Pride; having nothing to appear in before a pure and holy God, but “filthy, unwashed rags,” while he will always reject every “Covering that is not of his Spirit,” and can

* Gal. v. 7. † Gal. iii. 1. ‡ Rev. ii. 5.

¶ Hosea ii. 7.

acquiesce in nothing short of what is done by;
and cometh from himself.

But, the Text informs us, that the Sheep of Christ are to be fed. I have already hinted to you, they are not to be amused with Encomiums on the supposed rectitude of human Nature, (which, in its fallen State, is miserably depraved,) or told, that on Condition of *doing their Part*, in Obedience and Conformity to the Moral Law, then, to be sure, God will love and accept them: This kind of Doctrine the Heart of Man (which is *deceitful above all Things, and desperately wicked* *) is naturally prone to receive, and I doubt not, the white Devil of Self, will in this Respect, keep Pace with all Christ's Sheep while in this Wilderness; but how different is the Testimony of the Holy Ghost in this Matter: *O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, but in ME is thy Help* †.

To those who are convinced of their helpless Condition, and to whom Sin appeareth exceeding sinful ‡ in its Nature, and damnable in its Consequences, preach Christ in all his Offices, and make known to them the Freeness of his Grace: *Bring forth the best Robe* || (the Redeemer's Righteousness) to all the poor returning Prodigals, as the only Garment to cover their Souls: Tell the poor Sheep, who are frightened at the Thunderings of Sinai, and barked at by the Dog of Hell, that *there is now no Condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus* ¶: Exhort them to evidence their Union

* Jer. xvii. 9. † Hosea xiii. 9. ‡ Rom. vii. 13.

|| Luke xv. 22. ¶ Rom. viii. 1.

to, and Communion with him, by their *walking, not after fleshly Lusts, nor fleshly Doctrine, but after that blessed and holy Spirit*, who, whilst he leads to Christ for Salvation, will assuredly influence to Holiness of Life.

Thus, my dear Sir, I beseech you to take the Direction of God in his Word, in order to your teaching his Children in a Consistency with that Chain of revealed Truths, which the Holy Ghost hath been graciously pleased to transmit to the Church, and which alone is *profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, and for Instruction in Righteousness* * : In so doing, you will be enabled, I trust, to feed the dear Sheep of Christ, instrumentally, with *Food convenient for them* †.

Again, Sir, point them to the divine *Fullness* of Jesus; tell them all the Fathers had their Supplies therefrom. Methinks, the royal Prophet (David) personates every Prophet, every Apostle, every Gospel Minister, yea, every Christian; and that each of these by him appear to stand, and cry, *all my Springs are in thee* ‡. This Consideration, dear Sir, will make your Work delightful, whilst your own Soul, from that blessed Fountain of Light and Comfort, is *as a well-watered Garden* ¶ : But withal, my dear Brother, you are not to measure your Usefulness by what you feel. Perhaps your own *Fleece* may be *wet*, and all the rest *dry* : Remember, God is Sovereign, and blesseth his Church for his own Sake, and not be-

* 2 Tim. iii. 16. † Prov. xxx. 8. ‡ Psa. lxxxvii. 7.

¶ Isai. lviii. 11.

cause you preach (though called to it), and “woe be to you if you preach not the Gospel:” Dear Sir, beware of *Pride*: When you are at any Time elated in your Feelings, while exercised in the Duties of your Office, probably the Devil may suggest, and you will be ready to say to yourself, “Well done Hestup,” whilst at the same Time, the Lord gives you no Proof thereof, from the Confession or Experience of the People.

On the other Hand, beware of sinful doubts; Remember poor *Peter* in the Text, and the Saviour’s Love to him. Remember, when our dear Master arose from the Dead, ’tis said to the weeping, seeking Women, *Go tell his Disciples, and Peter**: What! poor *Peter* first? Yes, he is weeping yonder, ever since *Jesus* looked on him, he’ll preach no more, unless he further discover his Love to him: *Go, tell him he does not condemn him*. Oftentimes, my dear Sir, you may (in your public Appearances especially) be in great Darkness of soul, and apt to draw such Conclusions as these: “Art thou not ashamed of thyself! How thou hast blundered along! Where wilt thou hide thy Head! There were such and such great Men in the Meeting-house; what will they think of thee?” Sir, you never will preach better than when *Self* is down, your Crutches broke, and you are forced to cry like this Apostle, when afraid of Sinking, *Lord, save or I perish*†. I remember a pertinent Remark, in a Letter from the Rev. Mr Meadly of Liverpool to me,

* Mark xvi. 7.

† Matth. viii. 25.

that "you can never expect too little from *Self*,
 "nor too much from *Christ*:"—Perhaps, at
 this dark Time, some poor Mourner in God's
 Zion, may take you by the Hand, and bless
 God for that very Opportunity, in bestowing
 Light and Comfort through your Instrumenta-
 lity.

Remember, Sir, the Sheep are your Master's,
 and the Provision too, and that as he hath
bought them with his *Blood*, all their Support
 and Nourishment must be derived from his
 divine and inexhaustible *Fulness*.

Further, Sir, there is a private Way of Feed-
 ing Christ's Sheep, and that is, by visiting
 them, as saith the Apostle, *from House to House* *.
 In this Respect, Sir, I earnestly beseech you to
 be mindful of God's poor People: Do not on-
 ly be found amongst the Rich of this World,
 where the sumptuous Dinner, and the Bottle
 of Wine is brought forth, but visit likewise
 the *Cellars* and the *Garrets*: The Lapidary-
 Men cut their precious Stones chiefly in Gar-
 rets, so doth Christ cut and polish many of his
Jewels, with the keen Knife of *Poverty*, in
 these mean and dreary Apartments: Enter in
 with a Smile, and tell them, *God hath chosen the*
Poor of this World Rich in Faith, and Heirs of
the Kingdom †; and that *through great Tribula-*
tion ‡ they must enter the wealthy Place.

Pardon my Plainness, dear Sir; and now
 suffer me, in the last Place, to exhort you, to
 pray in Private for your People: It is to be
 feared there are many prayerless Pastors, as

* Acts xx. 20.

† James ii. 5.

‡ Rev. vii. 14.

well as prayerless People; *but I am persuaded better Things of you*: May the good Lord quicken you and me, and all his Ministers, and direct us to, and in, every Part of our Duty. Dear Sir, it is with a peculiar Pleasure I can say, I now deliver up this Branch of the Church at Newcastle to your pastoral Care. I pray God, who only *is sufficient for these Things* *, to make you abundantly useful amongst them, to their Increase in Numbers, and every needful Gift and Grace. I beg you will now sit down, and may the Lord the Spirit *powerfully* apply, what in *Weakness* hath been delivered, to your Soul, to my Soul, and all that now hear me. *Amen.*



AN EXHORTATION, &c.

WITH great Pleasure I have seen you, this Day, settled a Gospel-Church; with a Pastor over you, who is well qualified with Gifts, (and I hope with Grace also,) to go in and out before you, and *to teach you the good Knowledge of the LORD* †.

I sincerely congratulate you, on your present happy Circumstances; and most earnestly wish their Continuation, together with a gracious Improvement of them.

Inspired with such Wishes, in an humble Dependance on divine Grace, I proceed, ac-

* 2 Cor. ii. 16.

† 2 Chron. xx. 22.

according to the Province assigned me, to suggest a few scriptural Advices, suitable to the present Occasion, which, through the particular Blessing of Heaven, if properly attended to, may be for your present and everlasting Advantage.

With this View, permit me to beg your Attention, to the latter Clause of the 37th Verse of the 2d Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where the guilty, and self-condemned Multitude, are represented in the Agony of their Minds, as inquiring,

MEN AND BRETHREN WHAT SHALL WE DO?

BUT I would not have you imagine, that I suppose your State to be exactly the same with theirs; that you are only convinced of the Want of a Saviour: I would hope, you have not only in some Degree seen your Wants, but also found him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets did write, JESUS of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph *. Therefore, these Words shall only be made Use of by Way of Accommodation. And supposing them so accommodated, to be the Language of you, the Members of this Church, I shall endeavour to give, the important Inquiry they contain, a plain and practical Answer. And, it is intended, that this Answer shall respect, your Duty to God,—to your Minister,—to one another,—to other religious Societies,—and, to Mankind in general.

As for God, he is a Spirit, and we should worship him, in Spirit and in Truth †. He is the

* John i. 45.

† John iv. 24.

greatest and the best of Beings; possessed of every possible Perfection. *He is exalted above all Blessing and all Praise* *. We should therefore revere his excellent Majesty, fear his omnipotent Power, rely upon his sacred Truth, admire his gracious Goodness, and cherish Dispositions of Mind, suitable to all his glorious Perfections. The Doctrines he hath clearly revealed, we should implicitly believe; and the Precepts he hath graciously given us, should be unreservedly obeyed. We should love and praise him, for what he is in himself, and for what he hath done. We should praise him, for all his mighty and surprising Works of Creation and Providence; but especially, for his astonishing, and gracious Work of Redemption by JESUS CHRIST. In it, *his Mercy and Truth are met together; his Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other* †.

And that you, my Brethren, may fear God, love him, and in every Thing glorify his Name, be careful, to exercise yourselves in constant Watchfulness, and fervent Prayer. *Watch and pray, that you enter not into Temptation* ‡.

With Regard to your Minister, whom you have freely and unanimously chosen to preside over you, endeavour to make his Life as happy to himself, and as useful to others, as possibly you can.

With this View, respect his Person,—his Character,—and his Administrations.

* Nehem. ix. 5.

† Psa. lxxxv. 10.

‡ Matth. xxvi. 41.

*As to his Person ;—*Always carry yourselves with Decency and Affection towards him ; And, take Care to evidence your Affection, with Prudence and Discretion. For, I could not wish you, under the Mask of Kindness, to behave with that indecent, and unmannerly Familiarity, which frequently is too much practised. *Know him, who is now to labour among you, and is over you in the Lord, and esteem him very highly in Love, for his Works Sake **.

His Character too you should be exceedingly careful of. His Reputation for Piety and Morality, is of the last Importance to his Usefulness as a Minister. For, who will regard the Ministrations of a Man, whose Conversation and Behaviour are rather a Disgrace than an Honour to the Gospel of Christ. Now, the Profane and Careless will often attack the Character of the best of Ministers, for very obvious Reasons; and some decent Professors too, of opposite Sentiments, will, on many Occasions, think they do God Service, by misrepresenting and vilifying them. But you, my Brethren, should defend your Minister's Reputation, as far as possibly you can, without transgressing the sacred Laws of Truth and Virtue. And be particularly careful, that you never say or do any Thing, that hath the least Tendency to hurt your Minister's Character. Different Men are of different Dispositions, and all in the present Life, have some Infirmities: We should, therefore, make some little Allow-

* 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

ance for a Man's particular Temper and Circumstances; and not be over-ready to conclude, or say he hath acted inconsistent with his Character, when, perhaps, we have no real Foundation for any such Reflection. The Apostle knew People would be ready enough to entertain, if not propagate, scandalous Reports of the Ministers of the Gospel; and, therefore, charges them *not to receive an Accusation against an Elder, but before two or three Witnesses* *. Yet, if a Minister should really behave contrary to the Dignity of his holy Calling, "to defend him would be a Crime, instead of a Virtue; and an Affront to Religion, instead of a Recommendation of it."

Your Pastor's Ministrations should also be constantly attended;—for your own Benefit,—your Minister's Satisfaction,—and the honour of Religion.

For your own Benefit.—Under the Ministry of the Word, your Understandings may be enlightened, and your Affections spiritualized. Frequently, God's People, when attending religious Exercises, have had the greatest Reason to say, *It is good to be here* †. Let your own Interest then excite you to a regular Attendance on all the Ordinances of God: And, always remember, that in so doing, you contribute to

Your Minister's Satisfaction. It can be no Pleasure to him, after many painful Hours, spent in *studying, rightly to divide the Word of*

* 1 Tim. v. 19.

† Matt. xvii. 4.

Truth *, when he appears, to *give every one his Portion of Meat in due Season* †, to find your Seats empty, and his Ministrations disregarded. On the other Hand, your constant and uniform Attendance, will strengthen his Hands, and encourage his Heart, to increase, and abound in the Work of the Lord. Observing you to listen with attention, hoping you do profit, he will think no Labour to severe, no Pains too great, to promote your best, your everlasting Interests.

The Honour of Religion should likewise be devoutly regarded, in your Attendance on your Minister's public Exercises. If you neglect, others will make your Negligence a Precedent for doing the same; and think, there is little Need of attending Ordinances, when you, who are Professors, seem so much to slight them. Lay not therefore a Stumbling-Block in the Way of the Careless and Profane; but, in this Respect, as well as others, *let your Light shine before Men* ‡.

I now proceed, to lay before you a short View of the particular Duties you owe to one another. I do not so much mean the common Duties you are obliged to perform as Men, and as Christians; as, those which are incumbent on you, as Members of a particular Church of Christ. The principal of them are,—Sympathy,—Submission,—Watchfulness,—and, the most fervent Affection.

* 2 Tim. ii. 15. † Luke xii. 42. ‡ Matth. v. 16.

Sympathize one with another in your Distresses. Tribulation is, more or less, the common Lot of Mankind in the present State. *Man is born unto Trouble* * But real Christians are exposed to a Variety of peculiar Trials. *Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous* †. *It is through much Tribulation they are to enter into the Kingdom of God* ‡. Considering this, *bear ye one another's Burdens* ¶; and, endeavour to alleviate that Distress, with your Sympathy and tender Compassion, which perhaps you may not be able wholly to remove. *Weep with them that weep* ||.

Submission, also, is a Duty you owe to one another. Let the younger submit themselves to the elder; yea, let all of you be subject to one another, and be clothed with Humility §. Nothing hath done more Harm in the Churches of Christ, than a haughty and untractable Disposition. Beware of it. Let it have no Place among you. For, behold! in its diabolical Train, an Army of the most formidable Evils, ready to prey upon your peace, your Usefulness, and your very Existence as a Church. And, that you may never be betrayed by its Temptations, be always upon your Guard. Watch. And not only let every one watch over his own Heart, but also,

Watch over one another. Watch over one another for Good; but not for Evil. Too many are ready enough to watch that they may do Mischief; but I would hope better Things

* Job xiv. 1.

† Psa. xxxiv. 19.

‡ Acts xiv. 22.

¶ Galat. vi. 2.

|| Rom. xii. 15.

§ 1 Peter v. 5.

of you. Watch, that you may prevent it. I do not mean, that you should magnify every trifling Indiscretion. However, permit me to intreat you not to *to suffer Sin upon your Brethren* *. Kindly and courteously reprove them. Do it, with all the Expressions of the sincerest Affection; and, never expose even the real Faults of any, till you find that private Re-proof will be of no Use. And, even then, be careful to regard the Injunction of our blessed Lord; *If he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the Mouth of one or two Witnesses, every Word may be established. And, if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church,* (that is, make it known at a Church-Meeting,) *but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a Heathen-Man and a Publican* †, cut off, from the particular Privileges of Church-Members.

Watch also, with Regard to your Admission of new Members. Before you permit any to be united with you in Church-Fellowship, let there be good Reason to believe, that, in some tolerable Measure, they understand the Doctrines of the Gospel; and, that they have experienced their sacred Influence upon their Hearts. None but such as in the Judgment of Charity were converted to God, were admitted Members of the Apostolic Churches. Your Interests, as a Church of Christ, are not likely to be promoted, by a promiscuous Admission of Persons of all Kinds of Sentiments, and of

* Levit. xix. 17.

† Matth. xviii. 15, 16, 17.

doubtful Characters. Such an heterogeneous Mass, of jarring Materials, like *the Iron and Clay, which composed the Feet of Nebuchadnezzar's Image* *, will never be properly united; but, after occasioning the most piercing Sorrow, in the judicious and sincere of Heart, most likely will turn every one to his own Way, and *vanish like a Dream when one awaketh*. Such as join religious Societies, without knowing why, cannot at all be depended upon. It is most probable, they will sooner or later leave them, for the same Reason for which they joined them; or rather, because they saw no Reason at all, neither for coming in, nor going out. Be careful then to keep such at a Distance, till there is some good Grounds to hope there is a real Work of Grace wrought upon the Heart.

And, *let all your Works be done in Charity*. Let the most fervent Affection be manifest, on all Occasions. *By this*, says our Saviour, *shall all Men know that you are my Disciples, if you have Love one to another* †. As, *where bitter Envy and Strife are, there is Confusion, and every evil Work* ‡; so where Love, the Love of Christ rules in the Heart, there is Peace, heaven-born Peace, and all that a wise and good Man values, and holds most dear.

Cultivate this Grace. You will never have Reason to repent your Labour. It will amply repay your Toil. *For he that loveth, dwelleth in God, and God in him* ¶. It is, indeed, a very

* Dan. ii. 43.

† John xiii. 35.

‡ James iii. 16.

¶ 1 John iv. 16.

melancholy Truth, that there is much more Talk of this Virtue, than Reality. But, let it not be so with you. *Love not in Word only; but also in Deed, and in Truth* *. Manifest your Affection by being ready, at all Times, to do Good to your Brethren, whether in Mind, Body, or Estate.

But, it is high Time that I hasten to inform you, what you should do, with Respect to other religious Societies.

There are some, whose sentiments concerning Religion are the same, or nearly the same, with your own; and who appear, by the whole of their Conduct and Behaviour, *to love the Lord Jesus* in sincerity †. With them, always endeavour to live on the best Terms. Let no trifling Differences, respecting doubtful Points, hinder you from cordially embracing them, in the Love of Christ. When any Thing disagreeable happens in such Societies, mourn with them; and, on Account of their Prosperity, whenever it happens, heartily rejoice.

It may be, there are others who hold religious Opinions, which, according to your Views of Things, are very unscriptural, and perhaps inconsistent with themselves. Those Opinions too, may be insisted upon with much warmth, though with little Argument. Let such Persons have your Pity and your Prayers; but, be not fond of disputing with them. Nevertheless, if any Circumstances should seem to promise a probability of Success, in *Meekness*,

* 1 John iii. 18.

† Ephes. vi. 24.

attempt to *instruct those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them Repentance, to the acknowledging of the Truth* *. But, take particular Care of all unseemingly Heat, and all unbecoming Language, while you *contend earnestly, for the Faith once delivered to the Saints* †. Our boisterous Passions do no Service, in the Management of religious Controversy. The Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God ‡.

In a Word, when you produce your strong Reasons, in Behalf of the Gospel of Christ; let it be done with Candour and Good-Nature. Keep at the utmost Distance from a fiery, bigotted, persecuting Spirit. And, be always ready to allow others the same Liberty of Speech, and the same Liberty of Conscience, which (thanks be to God for the invaluable Blessings,) you happily enjoy yourselves.

I have only to add a few Words, regarding your Duty to Mankind in general, and I have done.

In the World you will find, chiefly, two Sorts of People. Some, who are violent Enemies to all scriptural Religion, though they may profess to believe the Bible; and, others, who are quite indifferent about the Matter. Respecting the former Class, behave towards them with all the Meekness and Gentleness, so earnestly recommended in the Gospel; and constantly, and uniformly exhibit an Example of Justice and Integrity. Give them no Cause

* 1 Tim. ii. 23. † Jude iii. ‡ James i. 20.

to reproach Religion on your Account. Let none of you suffer as a Murderer, or as a Thief, or as an evil Doer, or as a busy Body, in other Men's Matters *. In Simplicity and godly Sincerity, have your Conversation in the World †. And if, after all, the Enemies of Religion will find Fault, love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do Good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you ‡. Perhaps, your Harmlessness and Honesty may make a desirable Impression on their Hearts: And, under the powerful Influences of sovereign Grace, be the happy Means of accomplishing that, which holy Tears, and fervent Prayers, have hitherto sought in vain.

With Regard to such as are lukewarm about Religion; but, perhaps, in other Respects, useful and ornamental Members of Civil Society, behave to them with all Christian Couresy, and good Manners, so frequently inculcated by the inspired Writers. Do not be behind Hand with them, in Kindness, Affability, and Generosity. A four morose Carriage is no where recommended in the holy Oracles, and sometimes is a Stumbling-Block in the Way of the Careless. Be you, therefore, decently chearful. Yet, at the same Time, forget not the Gravity, and Sobriety, which are an essential Part of the Christian Character. Rejoice with trembling §§.

* 1 Peter iv. 15.

† 2 Cor. i. 12.

‡ Matth. v. 44.

§ Psal. ii. 11.

Finally,

Finally, Brethren, in all Things shew yourselves Patterns of good Works. *Whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, think on these Things* *. And may the God of Peace, that brought again from the Dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, thro' the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work, to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his Sight, through JESUS CHRIST; to whom be Glory for ever, and ever. Amen †.

* Phil. iv. 8.

† Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

F I N I S



